

Making Pottery

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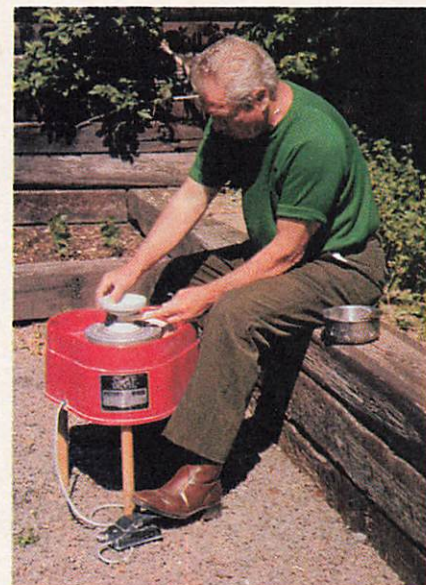
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Bill Green's enthusiasm for pottery keeps growing. Here he works at his potter's wheel on a shady patio.

# Pottery for pleasure

By Bill Green



**A**t 65, I'm just starting to explore the limitless field of pottery, where the opportunity for creativity and freedom of expression are infinite. It's a pleasant and inexpensive hobby. Best of all, any one can do it.

Too many projects designed for older people are either noncreative or semicreative. Painting by numbers? Coloring other people's ceramic figures? Nonsense. Get into pottery-making.

Start by visiting a pottery-making class or workshop. Take a piece of clay. Hold it. Mold it. Press it. Get the feel of it. Soon, you'll want to transform this ordinary piece of clay into an object of beauty and usefulness. Now, for an experiment, place the clay on the wheel. As it turns, shape the clay as you wish. Push in a little here with your thumbs; spread out the top with your fingers. Watch it slowly take the form of a bowl, a cup, a pot—a custom-made object created by you.

How to find available classes or workshops? You should have no trouble if you live near an art center, college, or adult education facility. Try to enroll in a beginner's class—one that's free or low-cost; a premium-priced course is probably more for the professionally inclined student.

If you can't enroll in a class immediately, ask to audit one. By being on the scene, you'll soon

know when there is a vacancy. You'll also widen your circle of friends and meet others who are interested in pottery.

The hobby or craft stores where you'll purchase your supplies will be good sources of information. In addition, they'll be able to direct you to local classes and to places where you can have your completed works fired and glazed.

Books on the subject are readily available at your local library.

However, by actually participating in craft classes you will learn more quickly and enjoy the activity.

Having done some research and observing, you'll be eager to try your hand at the wheel. Clay is a malleable medium. You can form it, crush it, re-form it and use it over and over. Practically every scrap can be used, so there is little or no waste.

Very few pieces of equipment are needed other than the potter's wheel—you can use the school's and later get one of your own. A knife, loop, spatula, shaping tool, sponge, and a few pieces of scrap wood for texturing are sufficient.

I use an inexpensive wheel that is compact, sturdy, simple and portable. I can move it outdoors when the weather is nice or use it in almost any room of the house. When not in use, it can be easily stored in a closet. The wheel meets my needs as an inexperienced pot-

ter and will probably serve me well for many years.

Since all work on the wheel starts with centering, you may want to purchase an accessory that will help you accomplish this with little effort. Unless you start with the clay centered, nothing symmetrical will result. But if this happens, don't stop—just do your best and see what develops. If the pot collapses or gets too far out of shape, begin again.

Later on, you'll require the use of a kiln for firing and glazing. Here you'll be introduced to the wonderful complex world of glazes—the lovely, shining, crystal-hard color that gives pottery its distinctive beauty. Be sure to seek out specific recommendations when you get to this phase of pottery-making.

In time, you'll find which kinds of pottery objects suit you best—whether a tall, graceful vase, a rough textured bowl or whatever.

I was so pleased with the first bowl I made, I decided to glaze it purple. I thought it looked gorgeous and I still do. So does my wife. And when she serves green beans in it from her own garden, we both glow with satisfaction.

You may start with the simplest dish before going on to more intricate items. But you can be sure that, whatever you make, you'll have the satisfaction of having created it yourself.





Party is over. Dorothy and Dan are about to depart, bearing gifts and some of the 50 balloons.

Being together is important. Dan picks a wild blossom for Dorothy on a seaside plateau.

there is more to life than soft drinks and hamburgers with fries.

Dorothy does a lot of reading. Dan spends hours "researching" the stock market. In the last few years, they've become interested in classical music and indulged in a good hi-fi system, which is used several hours each day. Their television viewing has tapered off considerably in recent years. Not too many programs hold their interest anymore.

Two or three times a week they play bridge with their friends, Mela and Pepe. As for traveling and vacationing—never, or hardly ever. They're both too comfortable with their home habits to take on the inconvenience of travel. Although they live only 125 miles from a very special city, San Francisco, I don't think they've even visited it in five or six years. They also avoid trips to Los Angeles to visit relatives and friends. The strains and irregularities seem greater than the rewards. For the same reasons, they discourage "guests in residence."

In my own marriage, I realize that Claudia and I are happiest when we are enjoying vigorous good health, are well rested and

fed, and free from the emotional tensions of work or family or friends. But because we both work and are involved with our families and many friends, emotional strain is often inevitable.

I think we both agree that when we retire we must greatly reduce our involvement with the lives of others if we are to achieve the degree of calmness we want in our

lives. If there are quiet interests and creative hobbies that bring satisfaction, one doesn't need to be busy and distracted.

I am proud of my parents. Theirs has been a good example. Usually, their differences have not seemed as important as their similarities. I am particularly grateful for what they've given me—a close and caring family. □



Television and travel don't appeal much to couple. But the solitude offered by sea, wind and an empty beach is something they both enjoy.